



CATHEDRAL OF SAINT MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION

OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

149 North Warren Street | Trenton, New Jersey 08608 | Telephone: 609-421-8163

Dear Parents of Our First Holy Communion Student(s):

As we begin this journey together, it is important to think about the role parents play in passing on the faith to their children. The parish will help support you in many ways, but it is the parents who have the greatest impact on a child's faith and faith development.

Sacraments aren't events that are separate from our lives, the way we raise our children, and how we spend time with our families. Sacraments can be seen as separate events, but are, in fact, celebrating the single reality of God's love for us. In each sacrament's celebration we

- *Remember* God's saving work in Jesus Christ
- *Celebrate* God's action within the life of the community
- *Express belief* and confidence in God's loving presence into the future

The Sacrament of Reconciliation celebrates God's forgiveness: through the sacrament we are reconciled with God and with one another. In addition, through the grace of reconciliation God empowers us to be people, parents, spouses, and friends who forgive.

In the Eucharist we celebrate union (communion) with God through Jesus Christ. At the same time, in receiving Jesus present in the Eucharist, we are nourished and given the grace to be the presence of Jesus to others.

What does this mean for you and your family as you prepare your son or daughter for the first celebrations of Reconciliation and Eucharist?

Since sacraments are always community celebrations, your *ongoing* connection with this faith community is important. Your connection to this parish is an important element of your son's or daughter's experience of the sacrament – it is a challenge to speak of the community of faith if your child doesn't have a sense of being part of this community. Thus, making an extra effort to participate in parish activities and weekly liturgy is important.

In addition to celebrating what God is doing in the sacrament, each sacrament celebrates what God has done and continues to do in your life and in the life of your family. Helping your child to see the connection between the sacraments and your life is essential.

This is also a good time for you to reflect on your own understanding of sacraments and to grow in your awareness of God's presence in your life. Praying and reflecting, reading the Sacred Scriptures (Bible) for Sunday liturgy in advance, simply taking time for quiet – all of these actions can foster your growth in faith.



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The following pages are filled with information concerning all the details that make First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion at St. Mary's Cathedral a special celebration. Things like the BANNERS which each child makes with their parents will be hung from the pews during the First Communion Mass in May. Afterward, your children may put this banner in their box of keepsakes or hang it in their rooms as a memory of their special day.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a community celebration of God's ever-present forgiveness that is always available to us. Through the grace of the sacrament we are strengthened to live faithful lives in light of being both a forgiven and a forgiving people. The most important way to prepare for the sacrament is to become more aware of being a forgiving and forgiving family.

Eucharist is one of the Sacraments of Initiation, the other two being Baptism and Confirmation. Each of these sacraments is a significant mark along the faith journey of a Catholic Christian. Eucharist is the core of the Christian life, the source of our *communion* with Christ and one another. Our faith is founded in it and fed by it. It was the focus of unity for the earliest churches and has continued to be so down through the ages. It is an act of *thanksgiving* (the word "Eucharist" means this). What are we thankful for? EVERYTHING – beginning with our existence. Eucharist is the "manna" that sustains us on our journey through the material world!

So, when you are talking about First Holy Communion with your child remind them that this sacrament unites them with the entire Body of Christ – the bigger family that they belong to. Help them realize that, each Sunday, millions of believers are brought together, strengthened and fed by Jesus through Eucharist. We need this – often – in order to go back out into the world and be Jesus to everyone we encounter. And that's what works toward making our world a loving and just place for all of us.

God bless your families as you prepare for this milestone along your child's faith journey.

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